

Fraser Valley Institution for Women

Anonymous Prisoner 2

There are a number of significant issues that prisoners face that should be changed. I have included the most significant to me.

The *grievance procedure* is too lengthy and is one-sided in terms of who holds the power to extend times to reply. Prisoners usually get only about twenty days to submit or reply within the grievance process. The institution can extend as much and as often as it wants. Obviously, this is an exceedingly unfair manner in which to conduct conflict resolution. The party with the most power has the most lenient of timelines. This is why grievances can take as long as two years to complete! Further, I am always within the system at every step of the grievance process when it should be someone independent from the institution deciding these matters.

Private Family Visits should not depend on participation in programming when the program content demands that if you do not admit to the crime for which you have been convicted you cannot complete the program. Moreover, you are given a bad report and suspended from the program. This results in a very bad report being put on your file. If you are attempting to appeal your conviction, this takes away the ability to complete a program. It puts a prisoner in an impossible catch-22 situation.

The *wages* are far below minimum community standards. What is even more unfair is that because I would not admit my guilt, my wages were dropped to E pay from C pay¹ because I could not participate in programs since I am appealing and cannot be forced to admit guilt.

Medical and dental are urgent issues. I have waited for fifteen months to get a crown for my two front teeth that I broke while eating a meal. The other tooth is loose now. The only offer from the dentist was extractions and false-teeth. The alternative was to pay for it myself at a cost of \$6,000.00 a tooth. I need four root canals as well. Further, in the rear of my mouth again only extractions were offered. Paying for it myself was the only option. As my pay was reduced to E pay, the lowest (about \$2.50 per day), it will be difficult to afford this.

The *removal of my old age pension* was unwarranted. I believe it is against the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* to take it away. Also, I still pay taxes.²

Since my income from outside sources is *less than a livable income*, I should be getting the \$50.00 refund three times a year for HST for purchases that are taxable within the penitentiary. This includes vitamins, personal

items and so on. We pay to have such amenities as cable, phone use and the institution welfare fund.

We need to repeal all the detrimental laws, policies and practices CSC initiated while Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his successive governments were in power. These laws have made prisoners lives unbearable and do not contribute to our rehabilitation. I hope that the current federal government will look over these urgent issues and address them in a manner that assists us in changing the system quickly for the benefit of all Canadians.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ According to CD 730 *Offender Program Assignments and Inmate Payments*: “Inmate payments or allowances will normally be awarded based on the following daily rates (see Annex B): payment level A (\$6.90), payment level B (\$6.35), payment level C (\$5.80), payment level D (\$5.25), allowance (\$2.50), basic allowance (\$1.00). Moreover, Pay reviews and decisions to increase or decrease an inmate’s pay level should be based on the following as defined in Annex B: (a) attendance and punctuality (b) *performance in meeting the expectations of the program assignment, including interpersonal relationships, attitude, behaviour, effort, motivation, productivity and responsibility* (c) involvement in his/her Correctional Plan, including level of accountability, motivation and engagement, pursuant to CD 710-1 - Progress Against the Correctional Plan (d) overall institutional behaviour, including conviction(s) for disciplinary offences, positive or refused urinalysis, etc. (e) affiliation with a security threat group pursuant to CD 568-3 - Identification and Management of Security Threat Groups (f) placement in a specialized unit (Special Handling Unit, segregation for disciplinary reasons, etc.) (g) duration of time inmate has been at his/her current pay level” (Correctional Service Canada, 2017).
- ² It should be noted that prisoners do not pay a traditional government tax on the income that they receive for the work that they carry out in institutions. However, when they make purchases at canteen or through the institutional purchasing program, they pay taxes on purchases and are also subject to a 22% “food and accommodation” tax and 8% charge to cover the costs of “administration” for the “inmate telephone system”.

REFERENCES

- Correctional Service Canada (2017) *Commissioners Directive 730 Offender Program Assignments and Inmate Payments*, Ottawa. Retrieved from <http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/acts-and-regulations/730-cd-eng.shtml>